

# 2015 Annual Report



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**DIVERSE VOICES**  
LISTENING TO  
INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS



## CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>Strategic Objectives</b>	4
<b>Policy and Standards</b>	5
<b>Services to Members and Students</b>	6
<b>Irish Aid Fellowship Programme</b>	8
<b>Organisational Development</b>	10
<b>Summary of Accounts</b>	11
<b>ICOS Council</b>	12
<b>Summary of Achievements 2015</b>	14

## ICOS VISION

That all international students who come to study in Ireland achieve their educational aims and are valued and treated equitably by the institutions that host them and by the wider society in which they live and work.

## ICOS MISSION

To be the leading independent organisation advocating for the rights of international students in Ireland. ICOS will collaborate with its members, student organisations and government agencies to ensure that international education policy and practice in Ireland is quality driven and remains firmly focused on the educational and social needs of all students.

### Dr Stephen Robinson, ICOS Chairperson

There is no doubting that the launch, in June, of the “Diverse Voices” training resource for intercultural competence development was ICOS’ highlight event of 2015. The launch which was generously hosted by RCSI gave recognition to the three years of investment which had gone into this project and the collaborate effort involved which had seen ICOS record and edit many hours of interviews with international students as well as academic and support staff across five institutions. ICOS now routinely draws on this resource to enhance its own training and it may be no coincidence that 2015 also saw a substantial increase in ICOS’ training output. We hope that our members and others interested in intercultural awareness training will find it equally useful.

On a less positive note, the college closure crisis, which dominated 2014, continued into 2015 and ICOS was again at the forefront in offering support to displaced students. Fortunately, the introduction of reforms and strengthened compliance measures resulted in fewer closures as the year progressed. ICOS’ main focus then turned to getting timely information out to students on the new regulations which would have a direct impact on them such as the standardisation of student working hours and restrictions to the list of visa eligible courses.

ICOS continues to be very proud of its association with the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme and 2015 was another good year for the programme. Irish Aid made over new 100 awards to qualified



candidates selected from Ireland’s partner countries. Meanwhile, the results of finishing fellows continue to impress with most candidates achieving honours grades. Work on developing a dedicated website for Irish Aid Fellowships was a major sub project in 2015 and the new website was close to launch at the end of the year.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to ICOS’ work during the year and especially to my colleagues on the Board and to the hardworking ICOS staff.

# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

ICOS' work is guided by objectives as laid out in its Strategic Framework (2012-2016) and this involves activity under 4 headings...

## Policy and Standards

To influence national and institutional policies so as to offer greater protection to international students and enhance their experience in Ireland

## Services to Members and Students

To strengthen the ability of our members to deliver appropriate and quality services to their international students while providing independent information and advice directly to international students

## Management of the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme

To work with Irish Aid and higher education institutions to develop the Fellowship Programme as an effective tool for capacity development in Ireland's partner countries and to contribute to a better understanding of the programme in Ireland

## Organisational Development

To strengthen ICOS' own capacity to deliver

## Advocacy

ICOS seeks to act as a voice for both students and higher education institutions in advocating for good policy and practice in international education.

As a response to the college closure crisis, significant reforms of the international education sector and student immigration were announced by the Government in September 2014 and May 2015 (see panel). These reflected measures advocated for by ICOS with regard to learner protection and escrow. The reforms provided a significant backdrop to the organisation's work during the year.

Also important were meetings and consultations with the Government in the context of development of Ireland's new International Education Strategy for 2016-2020.

In 2015, ICOS actively represented members' interests on national level groups, attended meetings and prepared written responses to consultations as needed. ICOS also provided comment to the media on the reforms as required. This work was particularly evident early in the year. In addition, ICOS continued to participate on members' behalf at quarterly meetings with INIS and the GNIB where ICOS members' questions on student immigration policy and service issues were addressed.

ICOS also represented members on relevant national fora concerned with student learning and student support services ensuring that the international student perspective is considered in all discussion.

In 2015, ICOS was represented on behalf of members on the following groups:

- High Level Group on Internationalisation
- Immigrant Immigration Network (IIN)
- QQI Consultative Group
- Learning Innovation Network: Student Led Learning Committee
- Confederation of Student Services in Ireland

## Key reforms taking effect in 2015

Standardisation of holiday periods during which non-EEA students can engage in full-time work.

Reduction of visas duration for English Language courses to 8 months (previously 1 year)

Launch of Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP) as a replacement for the Internationalisation Register, significantly reducing the number of visa eligible courses.

Mandatory learner protection requirements for private colleges seeking inclusion on the ILEP.

Requirement that private colleges maintain a separate account facility to safeguard student advance payments.

New requirements including a clear declaration of ownership, shadow directors, physical infrastructure and teaching capacity.

# Services to Members and Students

## Training

ICOS' training output significantly increased in 2015. The organisation delivered 35 (+20) training courses in cross-cultural awareness and communication; supporting international students and teaching in a cross-cultural environment in 14 (+6) different higher education institutes (HEIs) reaching close to 300 (+100) academic and student support staff.

In an additional development in 2015, ICOS also delivered courses to students directly reaching an estimated 350 Irish and international students across 3 HEIs. Evaluation indicated a very high level of overall satisfaction with ICOS courses, with a

large percentage of participants noting that their knowledge and skills had been increased.

ICOS also presented at a number of conferences during the year including:

- Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI) – “Diverse Voices: Training for Intercultural Competency Development in HEIs” 19 June, 2015 UCC
- UKCISA – “Diverse Voices: Putting International Student Voices at the heart of intercultural training”, 3 July, 2015, University of Sussex

## 'Diverse Voices: Listening to International Students' DVD and training guide

With the Minister for Education in attendance, ICOS successfully launched 'Diverse Voices' on 11 June in a high profile and well attended event hosted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

The new pack comprised a DVD with thematic resources drawing on extensive video interviews with international students and a 130 page training guide to support staff development work in higher education institutions.

Each ICOS member organisation received a complimentary copy of the resource pack, which is now regularly drawn on for our training for staff and students in higher education.

**The Diverse Voices: Listening to International Students' DVD and training guide is available for purchase - full details are available at the ICOS website.**



With the new pack (l-r): Nwafor Ezebuchi Hanachor, international student participant in the DVD project; Dr. Ciarán Dunne, Editor of Diverse Voices; Louise Staunton, Author of Diverse Voices.



Minister for Education and Skills Jan O' Sullivan, pictured above (centre), with Professor Hannah McGee, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, RCSI, (left) and Sheila Power, ICOS Director (right).

## Information and Advice

In 2015, ICOS continued to develop and update its website which aims to provide important information on studying in Ireland for International students and on ICOS services for members.

The organisation also maintained a dedicated college closures blog and continued to offer specific support to students affected by the 17 closures in 2014 and 2015.

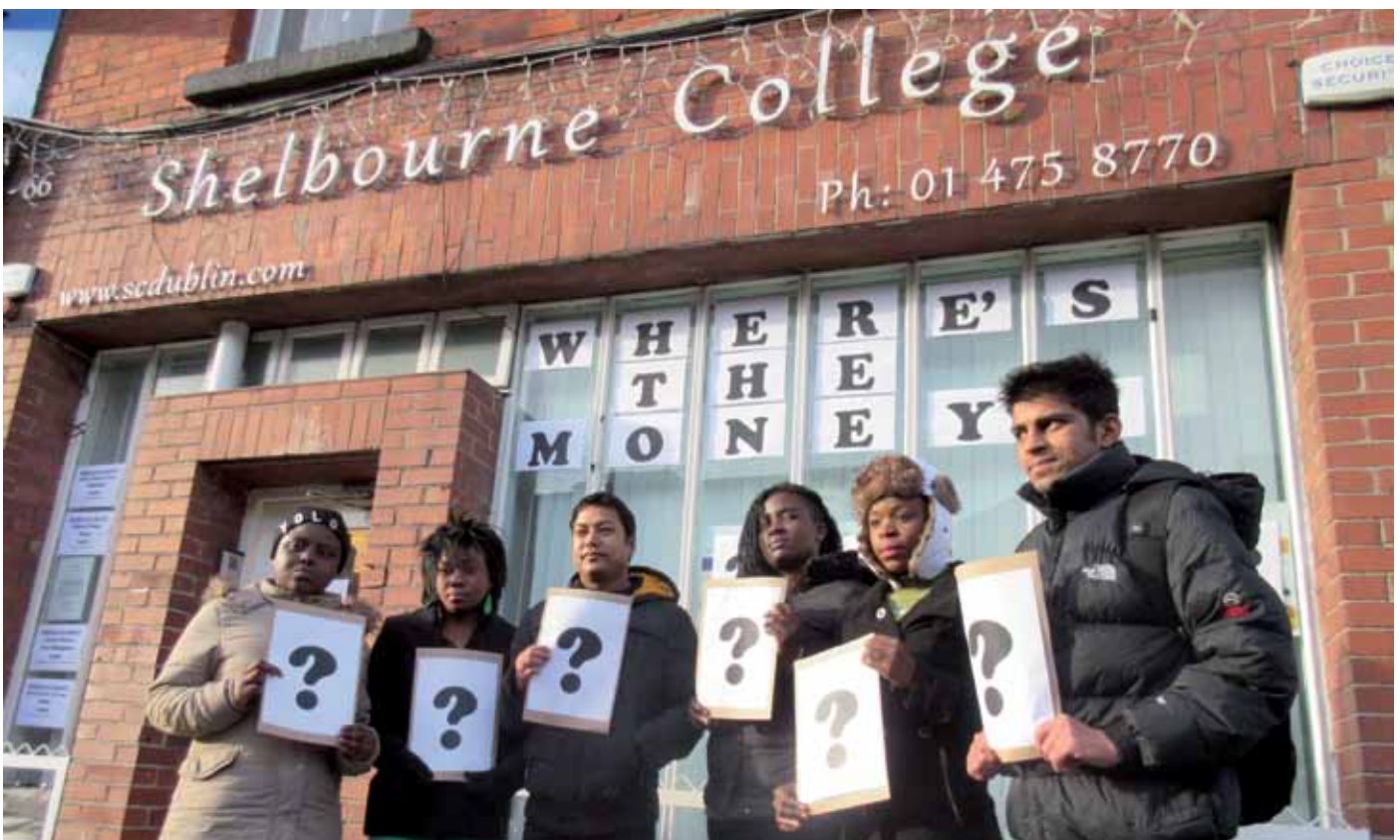
ICOS provided regular news updates to its members and supporters through ICOS' Facebook page. The number of 'followers' continued to grow markedly throughout the year, from 1,832 at the end of 2014 to 3790 at the end of 2015 (+107%)

A particular emphasis in 2015 was on offering as much information as possible on reform measures which would have a direct impact on students

especially the standardisation of working hours (effective from 1 January 2015) and restriction on the number of visa eligible courses, with the first changes implemented in June 2015.

Changes affecting English Language providers were delayed until January 2016 but ICOS was active in getting messaging to students about the new rules in order that students made informed choices about their choice of provider. Our messaging was particularly strong on the issue of learner protection.

ICOS continued to provide a telephone and email advice service for international students, staff in immigrant advice centres and higher education institutions. ICOS also mediated in a significant number of individual cases involving students who were experiencing problems.



**Shelbourne College Scandal:** After halting classes abruptly in November 2014, the college failed to re-start as promised in January. By then, ICOS had built evidence that over 100 would-be students had never been repaid their advance fees after being declined visas. Over €500,000 was unaccounted for. RTÉ News brought the case to national attention but none of this money was ever recovered. See <http://collegeclosures.icosirl.ie>

# Management of the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme



Above and right: Scholarship recipients attending the Irish Aid Fellowships Seminar in Limerick in April 2015

## Overview

ICOS is happy to report another successful year in respect of the management of the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme, which achieved all its main targets in terms of quality of applications and number of fellows completing successfully. 2014 had seen increased numbers and a growing diversity of schemes under the Irish Aid fellowship umbrella and this trend continued into 2015.

## 2015 in brief

- ICOS processed 138 applications for Irish Aid Fellowships across its four different strands. Ultimately, 83 fellows were offered awards in Irish higher education institutions with a further 27 offered awards for study in region.
- As part of a new contract with Irish Aid, ICOS co-ordinated the development of a dedicated website for the Irish Aid fellowship programme - [www.irishaidfellowships.ie](http://www.irishaidfellowships.ie) - which greatly enhances the visibility of the programme and provides information to all major stakeholders.
- ICOS supported the development of Irish Aid's fellowship alumni networks, managing a database of 1330 (+79) records and moderating a Facebook group which had 285 (+41) members at the end of 2015.

## Services provided by ICOS

- Financial and administrative services
- Coordination of placement of fellowship candidates onto academic programmes
- Travel and logistics service
- Pre-and post arrival information and briefings
- Orientation day and welcome party at start of academic year
- Links with academic staff and host institutions
- Immigration assistance and advice
- Accommodation queries and assistance
- Social and cultural events
- Support, information and advice to fellows during the course of their fellowship.
- Monitoring academic progress and welfare of fellows
- Reporting to DFAT on fellowship matters
- Research on the longer term impact of fellowships on recipients when they return to their home countries
- Development of an Irish Aid fellowship alumni network
- Investigation of regional course quality and research on programmes available through distance learning to expand the range of study opportunities
- Greater visibility of the fellowships through the development of case study and other materials and the use of the web





# Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



## Outcomes

An analysis of results achieved by completing fellows carried out in 2015 highlights the success of the programme and underlines the fact that Irish Aid is funding worthy candidates in a position to contribute significantly to capacity building upon their return home. 100% of the 2014-15 fellows who completed studies in Ireland in 2015 received honours grades

in their final awards with 25% achieving 1st class honours. ICOS completed two tracking studies of former fellows in 2015 with encouraging results regarding reported rates of either promotion on return or the assignment of additional responsibilities.



Flavian Majenga Lihwa from Tanzania undertook the 2015-16 MSc in Sustainable Development at DIT. He featured as one of seven case studies that ICOS provided to Irish Aid for 2015. A number of profiles of recent fellows are available online at [www.irishaidfellowships.ie](http://www.irishaidfellowships.ie), helping to illustrate the role of the fellowship programme in the context of Ireland's overall aid effort.

# Organisational Development

## Governance

Strengthening ICOS' Board and following best practice in terms of governance of the organisation remains a priority for ICOS. The Board met five times during 2015 and at its December meeting tabled a special briefing on Governance and the Charity Sector with expert input provided by the Wheel. This allowed for detailed discussion on various aspects of ICOS' compliance with required standards.

In 2015, Stephen Robinson, Director, Champlain College Dublin continued in his role as Chair of ICOS with Kevin Geoghegan, Griffith College Dublin, and Donal McAlister, IT Carlow, continuing in their roles as Vice Chair and Honorary Treasurer respectively.

## National / International Networking

ICOS keeps up to date and maintains its international profile through membership of UKCISA, the UK Council for International Student Affairs and the EAIE, the European Association for International Education. At national level, ICOS is involved in a number of networking forums including the Immigrant Information Network which regularly meets with officials in the GNIB and INIS. ICOS is a member of Dóchas and the Wheel and also liaises with immigrant support organisations such as the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) and the Immigrant Council for Ireland (ICI).

## Communications

Preliminary work and discussions were held with a web developer with a view to major re-development work on ICOS' website with targeted completion of the work in 2016. In the meantime, the existing website was reviewed and upgraded as far as possible. The aim will be to move to a new more user friendly hosting platform which will be able to incorporate more dynamic content such as video.

ICOS also reviewed and upgraded its ICT systems generally in 2015 and engaged a new service provider for IT support which has worked well so far and also resulted in some savings.

## Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

ICOS is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, which provides a framework which organisations can refer to when designing and implementing their public communication strategy.

ICOS was represented at the annual Code review meeting held by Dóchas and new staff and volunteers were provided with information on the Code and a web-based feedback mechanism is provided for comment from members of the public.

## Tribute: John Magoye RIP

ICOS regrets the sad passing on 20 November 2015 of John Magoye, Honorary Member and long-time friend and supporter of ICOS.

John represented the Overseas Institute for Community Development on the ICOS Council going back to 1979 and was still attending events and meetings and making an active contribution to ICOS up to a few years ago. John was always proud of his association with ICOS.



# Summary of Accounts at 31st December 2015

Approved by the Board: 7 April 2016

## Statement of Financial Activities

	Restricted Funds 2015	Unrestricted Funds 2015	Total 2015	Total 2014
<b>Income and Endowments from:</b>				
Charitable activities	1,875,156	249,268	2,124,424	1,779,195
Other trading activities	-	51,672	51,672	38,754
Investment income	-	67	67	80
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,875,156</b>	<b>301,007</b>	<b>2,176,163</b>	<b>1,818,029</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Raising funds	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	1,875,156	308,835	2,183,991	1,832,451
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,875,156</b>	<b>308,835</b>	<b>2,183,991</b>	<b>1,832,451</b>
<b>Net Income / (expenditure)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(7,828)</b>	<b>(7,828)</b>	<b>(14,422)</b>
<b>Brought forward at 1st January 2015</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>174,222</b>	<b>174,222</b>	<b>188,644</b>
<b>Carried forward at 31st December 2015</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>166,394</b>	<b>166,394</b>	<b>174,222</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

	2015	2014
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	1,061,045	1,058,627
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Receivables	45,054	77,885
Cash and cash equivalents	1,019,158	1,160,972
<b>Creditors</b>		
Payables: amounts falling due within one year	(1,038,997)	(1,203,396)
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>25,215</b>	<b>35,461</b>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<b>1,086,260</b>	<b>1,094,088</b>
<b>Reserves</b>		
Unrestricted funds	1,086,260	1,094,088
Restricted funds	-	-
<b>Equity attributable to owners of the company</b>	<b>1,086,260</b>	<b>1,094,088</b>

Auditors: Byrne Curtin Kelly, Bridgewater Business Centre, Conyngham Rd, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8

# Institutional Representatives and Individual Members

ICOS Council, December 2015

\* ICOS Board member

<b>Athlone Institute of Technology</b>	Ms Mary Simpson	Manager, International Office
	Ms Jackie Cunnane	International Office Co-ordinator
<b>Ballsbridge College of Further Education</b>	Mr Robert Griffiths *	Head of EFL
	Mr Laurence Cooke	Co-ordinator
<b>Champlain College Dublin</b>	Dr. Stephen Robinson *	Director
	Ms Lilly Johnsson	Operations Manager
<b>College of Computing Technology</b>	Mr Neil Gallagher	College Director
	Mr Ger O'Callaghan	Director of Admissions and Marketing
<b>Cork Institute of Technology</b>	Mr Mervyn O'Mahony	International Office Co-ordinator (Acting)
	Ms Carmel Jordan *	International Officer
<b>Dublin Business School</b>	Ms Denise McMorrow	Head of Careers and Student Services
<b>Dublin City University</b>	Mr Paul Smith	Head of DCU International
	Ms Audrey Byrne	Assistant International Officer
<b>Dublin Institute of Technology</b>	Mr Robert Flood	Head of International Affairs
	Mr Arnaud Teyssou *	International Student Experience Officer
<b>Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design &amp; Technology</b>	Mr David Doyle	Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager
<b>Foundation for International Education</b>	Mr Karl Dowling	Resident Director
<b>Galway-Mayo IT</b>	Dr John Kennedy	Head of International and External Affairs
	Mr Brian Doyle	Academic Co-ordinator
<b>Griffith College Dublin</b>	Mr Kevin Geoghegan *	Director of Market Research & Development
	Ms Sally-Anne McIver	International Officer
<b>IES Abroad</b>	Ms Megan Markey	Acting Director
<b>Institute for Study Abroad - Butler</b>	Ms Donna Noonan	Programme Assistant
<b>International School of Business</b>	Mr Francis Kelly	Director
<b>IT Blanchardstown</b>	Ms Fiona Canning	International Officer
	Ms Mairead Murphy	Marketing Manager

<b>IT Carlow</b>	Mr Donal Mc Alister *	International Coordinator
	Ms Rosemary Flynn	Non-EU Administrator
<b>IT Sligo</b>	Mr Patrick Lynch	International Affairs Manager
	Ms Eileen Gillen	International Officer
<b>IT Tallaght</b>	Ms Rosemary Cooper	Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager
	Ms Stella Browne	Administrative Officer
<b>IT Tralee</b>	Mr Eddie Scully	International Education Officer
<b>Limerick Institute of Technology</b>	Ms Cliona Campbell	Marketing and Internationalisation Manager
	Ms Niamh Kavanagh	International Officer
<b>Mary Immaculate College</b>	Ms Holly Cowman *	Director of International Office
<b>Maynooth University</b>	Ms Claire Doran	International Officer
	Ms Helen Kiranne	International Officer
<b>National College of Ireland</b>	Mr Richard Barry	Director - International Development
	Ms Sheila Mahon	International Communication Officer
<b>NUI Galway</b>	Ms Anna Cunningham	Director, International Office
	Ms Louise Kelly *	International Student Officer
<b>Royal College of Surgeons</b>	Mr Philip Curtis	Head of Admissions & Student Services
	Ms Corriena Brien	Student Services Manager
<b>Trinity College Dublin</b>	Ms Sinéad Ryan	Director of Internationalisation
	Ms Caroline Enright *	Regional Officer, N. America / Central Asia
<b>Union of Students in Ireland</b>	Ms Annie Hoey *	Vice President for Equality & Citizenship
<b>University College Cork</b>	Ms Suzanne Buckley *	International Student Support Officer
<b>University College Dublin</b>	Ms Shauna Hughes *	Senior International Events and Relations Officer
	Ms Carl Lusby	International Student Officer
<b>University of Limerick</b>	Ms Josephine Page	Manager, International Division
	Ms Amanda Glennon	Co-ordinator, International Division
<b>Waterford IT</b>	Ms Sinead Day	International Development Officer
<b>Individual (Honorary) Members</b>	Ms Alice Grattan Esmonde	Professor Brian McMurry

# Summary of Main Activities and Achievements 2015

Goal	Main Activities
To influence national and institutional policies so as to offer greater protection to international students and enhance their experience in Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICOS represents members on the following national groups:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High Level Group on Internationalisation</li> <li>- QQI Consultative Group</li> <li>- Learning Innovation Network: Student Led Learning Committee</li> <li>- Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI)</li> <li>- NGO Forum involving quarterly meetings with INIS and the GNIB</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ICOS also wrote submissions during the year and provided comment and interviews to the media as required.</li> </ul>
To strengthen the ability of our members to deliver appropriate and quality services to their international students while providing independent information and advice directly to international students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICOS delivered 35 training courses in cross-cultural awareness and communication; supporting international students and teaching in a cross-cultural environment in 14 different higher education institutes reaching close to 300 academic and student support staff;</li> <li>• At the request of members, ICOS also delivered courses directly to students in 2015 with more than 350 students attending courses;</li> <li>• Member's events included AGM and launch of Diverse Voices.</li> <li>• On-going response to information requests from members</li> <li>• Web based information service</li> <li>• E-mail enquiry service for international students.</li> <li>• Continuing response to college closure crisis</li> </ul>
To work with Irish Aid and higher education institutions to develop the Fellowship Programme as an effective tool for capacity development in Ireland's partner countries and to contribute to a better understanding of the programme in Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICOS processed 138 applications for Irish Aid Fellowships across its four different strands. Ultimately 83 fellows were offered awards in Irish higher education institutions and a further 27 candidates were offered awards in regional institutions.</li> <li>• ICOS co-ordinated the development of and manages a new dedicated website for the Irish Aid fellowship Programme <a href="http://www.irishaidfellowships.ie">www.irishaidfellowships.ie</a></li> <li>• ICOS also supports the development of Irish Aid's fellowship alumni networks managing a database of 1,330 records and moderating a Facebook group which had 285 members at the end of 2015</li> <li>• ICOS provided administrative and welfare support for all new and continuing Irish Aid fellows.</li> </ul>
To strengthen ICOS' own capacity to deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Board meetings with renewed focus on strong Governance and adherence to good practice. Application submitted to Charities Register;</li> <li>• Upgrading of ICT and preliminary work of development of new ICOS website.</li> <li>• All staff availing of training and opportunities to up skill.</li> <li>• Membership of national and international networks to keep up to date on best practice.</li> </ul>



ICOS has signed the Dóchas Code of  
Conduct on Images and Messages

See p10 and [www.dochas.ie/code](http://www.dochas.ie/code) for more information

Please send your feedback to [code@icosirl.ie](mailto:code@icosirl.ie)

**Photo credits:**

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Page 3 - Courtesy of Dr Stephen Robinson

Pages 8 and 9 - Courtesy of Irish Aid

All other images: ICOS

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